Christ the Central Glory of the Church.

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SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

ORDINATION OF REV. JOHN MONTEITH, Jr.,

OVER THE

Congregational Church in Terryville, Conn.,

OCTOBER 27, 1858,

BY

ELISHA LORD CLEAVELAND.

NEW HAVEN:
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Terryville, Conn., Nov. 6, 1858.

Rev. Dr. Cleaveland—

Dear Sir:

We, the undersigned, members of the Congregational Society in Terryville, listened with deep interest to the Sermon which you preached at the ordination of our Pastor on the 27th of October. Believing that the same, if printed and circulated, may, under the blessing of God, be productive of good both here and elsewhere, we do hereby cordially request a copy for publication.

Yours Respectfully,

F. T. WHITTEMORE,
R. D. H. ALLEN,
JAMES TERRY,
E. L. GAYLORD,
GAIUS A. NORTON,
ANDREW TERRY.

New Haven, Nov. 10, 1858.

Messrs. F. T. Whittemore, R. D. H. Allen, James Terry, E. L. Gaylord, Gaius A. Norton, Andrew Terry—

Gentlemen:

The Discourse you ask for publication, needs much revision to fit it for the press, but if you think it may do good among you, I will submit it to your disposal.

Very Truly Yours,

E. L. CLEAVELAND.

DISCOURSE.

COLOSSIANS I, 16, 17, 18.

"BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED, THAT ARE IN HEAVEN, AND THAT ARE IN EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THEY BE THRONES, OR DOMINIONS, OR PRINCIPALITIES, OR POWERS: ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM, AND FOR HIM: AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST. AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH: WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD: THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE."

In this passage Christ appears in his grandest and most commanding relations to the Church and to the universe. It opens into the past eternity, and reveals the Son of God existing "before all things," self-sustained and self-sufficient—creating all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, from the lowest to the highest, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers; and supporting all things he has made. "By him," or rather "*in* him all things consist"—literally stand together—he is the central column into which the whole structure is framed, and by which it is upheld. Around and in him the whole universe of creatures, the whole series of events, past, present and to come, converge and center, as the essential condition and final end of their existence. But if the entire world stands around and consists in him, much more must this be true of the kingdom of his redeemed. He can of course be no less than "the head of the body, the Church; the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence. Though dead, he was first in the resurrection from the dead; not merely as the commencement of a new series, but as the beginning of a new order of life, a new type of humanity. Nor this alone—he rose as the conqueror of death and the grave, for all those who sleep in Jesus. Thus he became "the

head of the Church, the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence."

Christ has the preëminence then, inasmuch as he is "head over all things to the Church," its supreme lawgiver, sovereign and judge; inasmuch as he is the first of those that rise from the dead, no more to die, and is himself "the resurrection and the life" to all who having slept in Jesus, shall wake with him; and inasmuch, also, as the entire universe was created solely by him and for him, and still subsists in him as its only support and ultimate end.

Such is the sublime teaching of the Holy Ghost in the words chosen for my text.

We have, then, as the theme of discourse, *Christ, the original source, the central object, the vital power, and the final end of the Church and of the universe.*

That he sustains this position and these relations, will appear, if we consider,

1. *That every system must have some governing principle, some central idea, around which all its parts are arranged, and by which unity is given to the whole.*

Without this, system is impossible—with it, it is inevitable. Nature attests this fact with many voices. She proclaims it in her minutest, and in her vastest organizations; in the crystalline law which, with mathematical precision, constructs the grain of sand, crushed beneath our feet, and the granite rock underlying a continent:—in the law of attraction which spheres and directs each falling rain-drop, and rounds and rolls the great globe itself:—in the magnetic fluid which, silent and unseen, darts human thought from land to land; or with stunning concussion shivers the mountain rock. It is an inward, organic force that from a single germ develops a blade of grass, and a cedar of Lebanon; yea, a mighty forest. It is a central force that carries the planets around the sun;—and the sun, with its attendant systems, on a still grander circuit around some far distant orb.

All this indicates system; all points to some fundamental law of unity which harmonizes the varieties into one. If we do not *see* the center of this majestic evolution, we know that

there *must be* a center. The more we study the universe, the more we are convinced that it is not a fortuitous collection of isolated forms and forces, but a grand whole, created by one hand, governed by one law, and destined to one result. All may not be alike intelligible to us; the stream of divine providence may sometimes pass under ground and disappear from our sight, but when it comes into view again, it is the same stream, flowing on in the same direction as before. These apparent breaks in the chain of causation are becoming fewer and shorter as the advance of science brings hidden facts and principles to light, bridging the chasms and revealing an uninterrupted mechanism, where all had seemed dark, disconnected and even discordant. And may we not hope that the remaining difficulties and seeming discrepancies are capable of a like solution in the future progress of scientific investigation?

If, then, the material universe is evolved from fixed centers of life and motion,—and if the same law binds the vast whole to one great point of attraction, must not the *moral* universe also be a system, with its appropriate center of vitality and movement? Can it be that while the one is all unity and order, the other is without an organic law, or a living heart? Does the Creator take less care of his moral than of his material kingdom? We must not be deceived by the confusion often apparent on the face of society. Men may seem to be so many independent units, incapable of fusion or of working out together a common result. And yet, amid all their varieties, dissimilarities and repellances, there are strong points of resemblance and powerful tendencies to union. They are of one nature, having many sympathies and necessities in common. So strong are these mutual bonds, that in spite of themselves, men are compelled to act together. Even when opposed to each other, they are not unfrequently made to subserve a cause they hate. As the result of their mutual conflicts, *that* is accomplished which neither designed, but which, nevertheless, accords with the real wants and interests of both. Thus the side currents and circling eddies of individual and partial opposition, are at last swept in with, and along upon

the main stream of the general humanity. And it is evident there is some high destiny, some paramount law, some all-controlling power, that thus defeats the purposes, and overbears the resistance of the wicked, and through an immense complexity and hopeless conflict of affairs, carries the race onward towards, and makes them work out results never intended or desired by them. Now what *is* this destiny—this law—this controlling power? What *can* it be but the Power that made and governs the world? What other being could impress one general movement on the vast ocean of human life? Christ, then, is the central object, the vital power, and the final end of the creation.

This appears,

2. *From the long and illustrious train of preparation made for his advent.*

The advent of Christ on the field of history, was no mere incident in the succession of events. He did not come to occupy a page on the records, or a niche in the temple of human fame. It was not to mingle his life with the current of passing events, but to direct and control history itself, that he came. It was not to labor with other benefactors of our race in repairing and perfecting a system greater and more glorious than himself, and for which it was honor enough to lay down his life in sacrifice;—it was to be himself the head, himself the ultimate end of the system. The system was made for *him*, not he for the system. He created it with his own hand, filled it with his own presence, exalted it with his own life, and administered it for his own glory. All previous history was but a preparation for his advent; all subsequent history is but a consequence of it. It was the fulness of time when he came; it was the completion of the long period whose slow unfolding was destined to bring forth at that precise juncture,—and not a moment sooner, nor a moment later,—this greatest event in the annals of our world. This was the stupendous result which time had been struggling four thousand years to produce. Every move on the dial plate through forty centuries of patient expectation, had indicated this momentous hour. The calling of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, the preser-

vation and exodus of the Israelites, the giving of the law, all point to the coming deliverer. His name could be traced in letters of atoning blood on every sacrificial victim laid on the altar, and on every column of incense that rose to heaven through the long period of the theocracy. Of him the prophets spoke in language of glowing prediction; of him the poets sang in strains of rapture; for him rivers were turned to blood, seas were divided, bread came down from heaven, and the sun and moon stood still. To the end that he might come of the seed of Israel, of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, that singular people were preserved two thousand years in a state of isolation from the idolatrous kingdoms around them. To bring them back when they fell away to the heathen, or to keep them from such apostasy unto the time of Christ, was the object of all that extraordinary legislation, those heroic deliverers, and wonderful interpositions, which impart such an atmosphere of supernaturalism, such a halo of grandeur to their entire history. Their very calamities—the decline and fall of both State and Church—the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Temple, with the seventy years captivity, had all this one bearing; all paved the way for the coming of the Messiah.

The course of *general* history also, was subservient to the same end. In the visions of Daniel, we see the grand procession of empires following each other in all the pomp and power of worldly greatness, each new monarchy trampling down its predecessor, to be itself overthrown in its turn;—but all terminating in, as they had prepared the way for, that mysterious kingdom of righteousness and peace which was to fill the whole earth and stand forever. As we read the secular history of those times, our minds are filled with the exciting movements of immense armies, of great battles and vast conquests. In the splendid achievements of Cyrus, of Alexander, of Pompey and Augustus, we almost forget that there can be greater names. In the consolidation of magnificent empires, in the leavening of barbarous races with higher principles of law and of life, we lose sight of nobler ends and better results. We are carried away with the grandeur of the scene—the splendor of the names—the prodigious forces in combination and in conflict—

the thundering tread and the terrific shock of embattled hosts,—and we are ready to conclude that no theater can be more august, and no events more sublime. But when we close the volume of human history and open the scroll of divine prophecy, we find that these empires rose, flourished and fell, not for their own sake, but to usher in the reign of Emanuel. Cyrus, Alexander, Augustus, were nothing but stepping stones to Christ. And when the fourth and last monarchy in the series antecedent to our Lord, had acquired universal sway, then the fulness of time came. At the period of the Saviour's birth, Rome had reached the summit of its power. The recent battle of Actium had left Augustus the undisputed master of the known world. With the fulfillment of this last prerequisite to the advent, there was realized a general state of preparation for the new economy. An extraordinary state of peace, succeeding to the intestine commotions which had so long distracted the empire, afforded a safe passage to the heralds of the cross from land to land, and a free utterance of their message. Public roads constructed by Roman munificence, opened direct and easy communication to the remotest provinces. Nations estranged by language, laws and customs, were brought together in reciprocal friendship and intercourse. Roman civilization was impressed upon barbarous tribes; Roman law, literature, philosophy and arts, following those of the Greeks, had imparted a more intellectual tone to the savage mind of the age. All these advantages threw up a high way for the Christian missionary to pass unchallenged through all countries, protected by the broad shield of the empire, to offer salvation to earth's waiting millions.

The most complete preparation of all, however, was in the *moral* condition of the world. For ages society had been ripening in vice, until it had now reached the lowest point in the descending scale of corruption. It is the general testimony, that public and private morals among the heathen were never in so desperate a condition. "The lives of all men, of every class, from the highest to the lowest," says an impartial historian, "were consumed in the practice of the most abominable and flagitious vices; even crimes too horrible to be

named, were openly perpetrated with the grossest impunity."* The misery of the people was, of course, in proportion to their wickedness. The whole world was groaning and writhing in pain together under their oppressive and degrading bondage; and every outcry of horror was an unconscious appeal to the coming deliverer. The disease had worked itself out to its last and most desperate results; and all things were now ready for the great Physician. Philosophy had tried her boasted skill upon the fatal malady. But all her fine theories brought no relief to the suffering patient. She had to confess her failure; and bid her followers wait until some divine benefactor should arise with wisdom and power sufficient to remedy the inveterate evil.

Thus in every possible way a train of preparation was laid for the advent of Christ. Who, then, can doubt that he who was foreshadowed in all antecedent history, can be anything less than the beginning and the end, the first and the last in the infinite plans of Jehovah?

The preëminence of Christ appears,

3. *From the revolution he has wrought in the religious and social condition of the world, since he became manifest in the flesh.*

It is the remark of a skeptical philosopher, that the birth of Christ "was the turning point of the world's history." Certain it is, that from that moment the course of events received a new direction, and was impressed with a new character. A form of life and civilization was then inaugurated, which was destined to penetrate the nations of the earth with a force the most active and resistless ever felt by the human mind.

Think of the work to be done! The heathen world one mass of moral putrefaction,—one enormous system of hideous idolatry, interwoven with the political fabric, and defended by the whole power of the State! Think of Judaism! a hollow and polluted relic of better days; a compost of human traditions; a lifeless formalism, covering a rank and rotten corruption of morals. Into this vast sea of spiritual death were to be infused

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* Mosheim.

the waters of life. This tremendous tide of wickedness, impelled by a momentum of forty centuries, was to be stemmed and turned!

Look now at the agency by which this superhuman undertaking is to be accomplished. To the eye of sense how insignificant! A child is born; like in appearance to any other child—with nothing to distinguish it visibly from thousands of children born on that same night, save one little star hovering over the spot, and *that* seen only by the heaven-guided Magi. The world is profoundly unconscious of the event—nature gives no sign of what has taken place, and the course of time flows on undisturbed. And yet this little infant is destined to effect the most radical and wide-spread revolutions ever known to man! At his word, old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new. He will change laws and customs, morals and manners, hearts and lives. He will uproot every practice, and overset every throne that opposeth him,—until his kingdom shall absorb every other, and fill the earth with righteousness and peace.

But how is this to be done? Not by physical might or political power. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants fight. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal but spiritual, and therefore mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds. He does not begin with forming nationalities, and then relying on the influence of rulers and leading men to gain the people. More commonly he reverses this order of proceeding.

Nor does he deal with men in masses, but approaches them as individuals,—he takes them one by one, as distinct persons, each separately responsible to God. Neither does his work upon them commence with their outward conduct, following up towards the fountain-head. He begins at the heart rather, and having purified that, leaves it to cleanse its own issues. He regenerates the inner man first, and the reformation of the outer man follows as a natural consequence. "*Ye* must be born again." The sinner himself must be created anew by the Holy Ghost, and then the current of action and feeling will take shape and hue accordingly.

Still less does he condition the bestowal of his benefits on personal merit or conformity to the law. He does not found his pardon on the work of the sinner, but on the work of Christ. He does not justify because he has first sanctified; but he sanctifies because he has first justified. The whole work of quickening and transforming into the likeness of Christ, is based upon justification through the atonement. The sinner's Christian life begins with an act of acceptance on God's part, grounded upon the merit of Jesus alone. This only does, and this only can open the way to evangelical obedience and progressive sanctification. Starting in the Christian course, with this gift of eternal life already in hand, he presses on without fainting, knowing that his labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Equally simple and unostentatious is the instrument employed in effecting this vast revolution. It is all done by the foolishness of preaching. The word of God is proclaimed, not by angels, but by pardoned sinners of mankind, and the Holy Spirit opens the heart to receive it by faith.

Armed with this simple, but powerful weapon, and encouraged by the promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," eleven humble men, without learning, or secular influence, but rich in faith and love, undertook to execute their Lord's great command, "Go ye unto all nations, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Now if with such an instrumentality, worked upon such a method, and acting on such a mass of moral corruption, it turns out that the whole face of society speedily assumes a new aspect of moral purity, who will deny that there is a power in Christ and Christianity, to be found nowhere else?

Such a reformation then, we affirm, *has* been achieved. Look at the result of its first proclamation in Jerusalem. A few earnest words of rebuke and testimony, and three thousand souls are gained to the new religion. This number is soon swelled to five thousand in that city alone; and still the accessions come in, until at the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, they are spoken of as "many myriads," or "many tens of thousands." Within thirty years from the date of their commission, the Apostles and their fellow-laborers had planted church-

es in almost every nation of the Roman Empire. According to Tacitus, there were Christians enough even in Rome, to furnish a "great multitude" of martyrs. Seventy years after Christ, the younger Pliny reports to Trajan such a marvelous spread of the Gospel in Bithynia, that "the temples of the gods were almost deserted." At that time the Roman empire, embracing a population of not less than a hundred and twenty millions, was penetrated throughout with the Gospel. Eighty years later, Tertullian represents that a vast numerical majority of the people had become Christians. Addressing the Roman rulers, he says: "We are but of yesterday, but we have filled everything that is yours; cities, islands, castles, free towns, council halls, the very camps, all classes of men, the palace, the senate, the forum. We have left you nothing but your temples. * * If we, such a multitude of men, were to break away from you, retiring into some remote corner of the world, your government would be covered with shame at the loss of so many citizens. The very desertion would punish you." Such was the success of the gospel within the first hundred and fifty years after Christ's ascension. For four thousand years, the world had been growing more and more wicked. Government, philosophy, poetry and art, all tried their skill, but none could arrest its downward progress. Christ came, and in less than two centuries idolatry was almost universally abandoned—the worship of God in Christ was everywhere established, a pure morality superseded the old corruption—and the love of Christ, and the love of souls, had become the dear and sacred bond of society, and the holy and powerful impulse of action. And all this was accomplished by the secret operation of the Spirit of Christ, in connection with the simple preaching of God's word! Nor political power, nor great names, nor carnal policy, nor human philosophy, nor poetry, nor art, nor wit, nor sarcasm, contributed to this transcendant result. It was the solemn, earnest, affectionate presentation of the Gospel message, made effectual on the heart by the Redeemer's grace; it was this alone that dethroned the idols, extirpated the vices, and revolutionized the principles, the laws, the manners, and the entire life of the ancient heathen world.

Without gathering fresh illustrations of this truth from later times, I submit if he who could accomplish so great a change in so short a space, must not be the original source, the central object, the vital power, and the final end of the church and of the universe.

The doctrine of this discourse is suggestive of some important truths and practical lessons.

1. *It teaches us the true and proper divinity of Christ.*

If he made the universe, and made it for his own pleasure and glory,—if this whole mighty frame-work of worlds consists, stands together in him—if he is the central object around which they revolve, and upon which they concentrate their splendors—if he is the pivot on which our world's history turns—if all that preceded him was but a preparation for his coming, and if all that followed his advent is but a development of his power,—if from the moment he assumed our nature, that nature began to undergo a radical and blessed change, resulting in the regeneration of society, and the unparalleled exaltation of humanity, then, surely, he can be no less than God. The place he occupies is one which draws all worship and admiration. It is God's place, and if Christ is not God, then he is usurping the throne of Deity. To be the center of such a system, is to be supreme, "God over all, blessed forever."

The doctrine of this discourse teaches us,

2. *The point of view from which all truth is to be contemplated.*

Truth is never seen aright until it is seen in Jesus. It may seem trite to say that Christ is the center of the Christian system; and yet how many who profess to believe and teach Christianity, fail to give him that position? The stand-point from which not a few study and settle the relations of truth, is some scheme of philosophy, some principle of morals or philanthropy, or perhaps of politics. From this assumed center their system radiates. Christ may have a place, but not his own place—not the chief place—he is merely a subordinate figure in some niche of the temple, and not its presiding Deity. Of course, in such a scheme, all is disproportion and

deformity; even its truths lose their verity and contract the vicious element of falsehood, because they usurp the position which belongs only to the sun of the system. The question which perplexed the mind and burned on the brain of Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" is still a question with speculators in things divine. Some make him a God without humanity; others, a man without divinity. Whether his great office was to teach and exemplify the truth, or to express God's love to man by a martyr's death, or something more than these—they are not all able to decide. But what shall we do with Jesus? What place in theology shall we assign to him? is still a burdensome question, with which many unfortunate minds are laboring. *Our* answer to this question is already given. Christ's place is central and supreme,—he is the first and the last, the all and in all of Gospel truth. He is himself "the way, the truth, and the life." Indeed nothing is understood aright, unless seen in its just relations to him. Truth as it is in Jesus, is a different thing from truth as it is in nature, in philosophy, in poetry, or in art. Sin and holiness, justice and mercy, take on new aspects when viewed from the cross. Every attribute of the divine character, every doctrine of the divine word, every declaration of God, every duty of man, becomes more significant and momentous when re-set in the effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness. Indeed, Christ is the grand point of departure and return, not only for revealed, but for natural truth; not only for things spiritual, but for things material as well. We should not know for what the universe was created, had not Christ been revealed. Its import and design were mysteries until the Son of Man was lifted up. Then we learned that "all things were made by him, and *for* him,"—that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things;" to the end that "in the dispensation of the fullness of times, God might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in Him."

From our subject we learn,

3. *That Christ is the great object for which nations exist, and the providential government of the world is carried on.*

No doubt Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus, Alexander and the Romans, thought that in building up their successive empires, they were enacting the grandest dramas this world ever saw. But *we* know (for inspiration has told us) that with all their centuries of conflict and bloodshed, the only really great thing they ever did, was to prepare the way for Christ—that for this sole end they were raised up, and that when they had successfully performed their part towards this end, they were thrown aside as of no farther use.

Nor have we the slightest reason to doubt that God is using the nations still, as he used those of old. He still rules, as in the armies of heaven, so among the inhabitants of the earth. Amid the confusion and uproar of embattled hosts, it may not be easy to discover what ends he is to bring out of these terrible scenes; but when the clouds of smoke and dust have passed away,—when the effects of the conflict have become visible, then does it appear that while the combatants were contending for objects of their own, God was employing them for infinitely higher purposes. But lately the whole civilized world resounded with the thunder of that stormy siege which raved around the walls of Sebastopol. The nations which poured their powerful armies into that field of blood, to exhaust all the resources of modern science and military skill, in the work of carnage and destruction, had their political ends to gain, and may now be enjoying their political reward. Let the world admire the grand array, the deeds of might, and the glorious national results; let the trump of fame celebrate the men who achieved military greatness in that fearful war; from all these human and earthly aspects of the scene, we turn away to look at what God has accomplished by the cannon of the allies. *They* meant one thing; *he* meant another. *Their* plans may, or may not be, consummated; *his* designs will be realized perfectly and without a peradventure. Already do we see the reason why he summoned those immense armies to the Crimea, and drained Europe of so much blood and treasure. The true object comes out in the decree of the Ottoman government, guaranteeing to every subject of the empire, the sacred right of private judgment respecting matters of religious opinion and

practice. The grandest result of that war was the edict of toleration, every sentence of which, it has been well said, was a revolution; an edict whereby Moslem and Christian had liberty to change their faith at will. It was a battle for freedom to worship God. This triumph alone was worth the whole cost of the war. It seems to connect modern history with ancient prophesy, and to fulfill the outpouring of the sixth vial upon the great river Euphrates, drying up the waters of the river, and preparing the way of the kings of the East. And we cannot but anticipate the rapid progress of a movement which is to sweep away Islamism, and reëstablish Christianity through all those regions once consecrated by Apostolic labors.

But the Turkish empire is not the only nation where we see the over-ruling hand of God. The same wisdom and power preside over *us*. The hand of God is concerned in all the social and political changes through which we are passing. Let us not be dismayed at the rise or fall of parties—at the revolution of policies and systems. Many a time does the ark seem lost beneath the rolling billows—but we must not forget that God rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm. The deck of our ship of state may be the scene of many a domestic strife—it may be the theater of corruptions, quarrels and crimes of all kinds—we may be almost reduced to a state of anarchy—and yet it is God who guides the *ship itself*—his hand alone controlls the helm and shapes her course. Let us hope that he is preparing for us a glorious future—that our very crimes will work for our good—that he will cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he will restrain,—that with all our follies and all our iniquities, he will keep us in the broad current of Christian history and make us workers in the up-building of his kingdom,—and that having served himself of us to this end, he will not cast us away like Babylon, like Egypt, like Rome; but that having used us, as intelligent and willing, not as blind, unconscious instruments in effecting his designs, he will admit us to a full participation of that glory and blessedness, to the accomplishment of which we have contributed our humble agency.

4. *The final consummation of all things glorifies Christ.*

If he is the first and the last, the beginning and the end in the Church militant, what must he be in the Church triumphant? If here on earth, where he has been seen only in his state of humiliation, he is the central object of attraction and sole fountain of influence, what must he be in his state of exaltation, enthroned in all the visible splendors of Godhead? If, amidst the confusion of passing events, restricted as we are to partial and fragmentary views, we are able to see that in Christ "all things consist;" how much more will this great truth stand forth to the gaze of mortals, when the mystery of Providence shall be finished, and they can look back on the whole dispensation as closed up, and upon its grand results as finally determined! If, while his cause is subject to mournful relapses, depressions, afflictions, and persecutions, he still appears "in all things to have the preëminence," how much more when that cause shall triumph over all opposition, and Christ shall be seen as the conqueror, with every enemy under his feet! O then, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;—when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,"—when "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him,"—when the risen dead, small and great, shall stand before him, and rocks and mountains shall flee away from his presence,—when he shall say to the righteous, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world;" and to the wicked, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;"—when he shall have gathered together his redeemed,—yea, all his loyal subjects from every world, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and his bride shall have made herself ready with garments white and clean, even the righteousness of the saints,—and the whole family, from the oldest to the youngest, from the greatest to the least, of God's children, shall be present to witness the celebration of the nuptials;—when all heaven's minstrelsy, and all heaven's harmonies shall

be called forth to grace the occasion, and the voice of countless multitudes, as the voice of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunderings, shall rise on the air, saying "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth: Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready;"—then will it be seen and felt, as never before, that "ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM, AND FOR HIM;" that "HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST;" that "HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; THE BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD; THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE."